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FAA FOR R. SMITH  
MONTREAL FOR STEVE CREAMER AT US MISSION TO ICAO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2018  
TAGS: [NATO](#) [EAIR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: SUPPORTING THE USG'S PROPOSAL FOR CIVIL AVIATION  
IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: KABUL 223

Classified By: Office Director Gary Robbins for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1.(U) This cable contains an action request, please see Para  
[13](#).

2.(C) SUMMARY: Working with Embassy Kabul and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the U.S. Air Forces-Central Command (CENTAF) has drafted a proposal under the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) to encourage Afghan ownership and responsibility in civil aviation. The draft proposal will gradually transition civil aviation functions back to the Afghan government. A competing version of the way forward in Afghan civil aviation is supported by the Brussels-based NATO International Staff of the Defense Investment Division (Airspace Management). Their proposal would bypass the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to make progress more quickly. USNATO and other info addressees are asked to lobby relevant stakeholders to support working within the ANDS as called for in the CENTAF plan for developing Afghanistan's civil aviation capacity and working towards meeting the Afghanistan Compact goals. END SUMMARY.

[13](#). (SBU REL ISAF) ACTION REQUEST: In advance of the February 28 Airspace Task Force meeting, USNATO is asked to draw on the following points and demarche relevant officials in support of working within the ANDS as called for in the CENTAF proposal. INFO addressees are asked to use these points when interacting with all relevant stakeholders. These points may be left as a non-paper.

-- As Afghanistan's main political forum for engaging the international community on economic development issues across all sectors, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board/Afghanistan National Development Strategy (JCMB/ANDS) framework has superseded the NATO Clearing House/Steering Committee structure for civil aviation development. JCMB/ANDS is the premier mechanism for determining, coordinating, and monitoring development strategy between donors and the Government of Afghanistan. Competing and/or donor-driven frameworks challenge resources and limit the capacity of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation (MoTCA) and donors to engage adequately. The JCMB/ANDS approach results in greater Afghan ownership

and responsibility for the development process, and places Afghans and their institutions in an increasingly important role in shaping their future.

-- The CENTAF/NATO transition strategy, conforming to the ANDS process, has the potential to normalize the civil aviation operating environment in Afghanistan and provide substantial economic benefits.

-- A primary civil aviation development objective in Afghanistan is to achieve a civil aviation authority (CAA) capable of full compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and recommended practices. A legally constituted civil aviation authority already exists in the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation; however, expertise and capacity is limited, and there is a need for greater independence in CAA operations. Passage of the new civil aviation law will provide adequate authority to establish and enforce safety regulations to international standards. Meanwhile, our efforts will continue to build CAA capacity in MoTCA to make full use of the new law once enacted.

-- Increasing CAA capacity and firewalling it from political interference are critical, but we should build upon GIROA sovereignty. Regardless of whether CAA functions are outsourced or improved within MoTCA, it is essential that Afghans remain in positions of authority.

-- The problem of balancing military and civilian demands at airports is exacerbated by the lack of a formal master planning process. Airport development is proceeding in a parochial and haphazard manner and does not conform to MoTCA or international donor intentions. Furthermore, airport master planning is essential for achieving the full economic potential of each airport and increasing civil aviation revenue. Since most Afghan airports are joint military-civilian use, all parties involved should consider funding preparation of a master plan as soon as possible.

-- A long-term strategy and investment focus, in association with airport master plans and "international best practice" airport management, is the best way to optimize economic growth potentials. Donor- and NATO-led investments at airfields must be combined with incremental investments where possible to sustain this important national infrastructure.

-- There remains a chronic need for additional resources in the Afghan civil aviation sector. Flights have increased 40% from 2002 without an associated gain in MoTCA capability. Any plan should also present accompanying business models and work jointly with MoTCA and the Ministry of Finance on implementation.

-- The United States, Canada, and ICAO engage daily in development

efforts directly with MoTCA, based on written agreements with the GIROA. We hope that others will also join in making similar coordinated arrangements.

-- Ground security at Kabul International Airport (KIA) remains a substantial impediment to expansion of the Afghan civil aviation sector. U.S. policy supports Afghan goals to establish a contracted aviation security function at KIA compliant with international standards as quickly as possible.  
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